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## New Roles Grow Out of Grand Haven's Homegrown Program

**GRAND HAVEN, MI:** When Grand Haven Area Public Schools (GHAPS) launched the Homegrown program last year, it paired excited students and teachers with committed local companies, charging them with solving a design challenge. What grew out of the program was more than just results for the classrooms and companies. It grew a stronger community/school partnership, two new roles and statewide recognition for the program.

In recognition of his work with Homegrown, Grand Haven STEM teacher Andrew Ratke was recently named a member of the Michigan Innovative Educator Corps. This statewide recognition and grant program recognizes educators who utilize an innovative educational program, methodology or strategy to help prepare their students for future career success in high-demand fields. The award comes with a \$5,000 stipend for the educators, plus an additional \$5,000 to work with their local ISD to share, expand and replicate their practices.

"This award really recognizes the entire Homegrown team, which includes and Beth Bolhuis, Danielle Bolthouse, Alex Harsay, Beth Ingall, Katie Ingram, Annie Ratke, Erin Shillinger, Brooke Stolarz, Amanda Tejchma and Nick Tejchma," says Ratke. "We all worked together to ask 'What's going to work best for our classroom, students and community?'"

Ratke's work with design thinking also comes with a new title this year. He'll be the district's first ever design thinking coordinator, a part-time position made possible because of community support through the district's enhancement millage.

"There is real excitement about design thinking and project based learning, and there are so many opportunities to incorporate them in the classroom, but there was never a 'go-to' person to help partner businesses and classrooms," says Ratke. "This role will allow me to be the point person not just for Homegrown, but for all design thinking experiences in the district."

Ratke is not the only one in a new role. Nancy Manglos, Director of Talent & Leadership Development for the Chamber of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, will also fill a part-time role that serves as the connection to local businesses. She'll meet with businesses to determine their challenges, how students might be able to help and what would be at the right time to partner for a project.

"This partnership is really unique to our district," Ratke says. "Having a facilitator between the businesses and the district ensures that we are including all businesses who want to help, creating a sustainable pipeline of partners and not over-asking in any one area."

Grand Haven Area Public Schools is a district of distinction for students preschool through 12th grade. With a goal of providing exceptional educational experiences, GHAPS is committed to success for all students and strives to provide exemplary programs and opportunities to meet the diverse needs of students.

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